

The Disadvantages of Being a Correctional Officer

by Ralph Heibutzki, Demand Media

Correctional officers oversee inmates of jails and prisons, and are responsible for enforcing the rules of their confinement. As a profession, corrections work is one of the most stressful in law enforcement. Officers must remain continually alert during eight- to 16-hour shifts to avoid being attacked or killed by the offenders that they supervise. The intensity of these environments often prompts officers to shut down emotionally, reducing their ability to function effectively within the institution.

Assault

Correctional officers face constant risk of being assaulted or maimed by inmates turning common objects into unconventional weapons. These materials include broken glass, locks, safety razors and toiletries. The greatest threat comes from objects sharpened to become weapons, according to a research report submitted to the U.S. Justice Department in November 2007. Toothbrushes, for example, can be sharpened for stabbing, or reshaped to hold metal blades. Officers must remain constantly vigilant for such threats, which boosts their physical and mental stress.

Job Burnout

Custodial environments seesaw between lengthy periods of boredom and isolation, as well as physical danger. To cope with these extremes, correctional officers will disassociate themselves emotionally from their surroundings. However, this mindset also leaves officers vulnerable to job burnout, according to an article posted on the corrections.com website. Officers focus on getting through shifts without incident, but no longer care about what they're doing. Eventually, the officer loses the ability to empathize with those around him, a phenomenon that's commonly labeled as "compassion fatigue."

Mortality Rates

Correctional officers suffer the second highest mortality rate of any occupation, according to statistics posted by the Maine Department of Public Safety. Due to the job's unrelenting physical and psychological stresses, the average correctional officer lives just 18 months after retirement. A study of retired correctional and law enforcement personnel in Florida also found similar disparities between both groups of officers and the general population. Overall, Florida residents enjoyed an average lifespan of 74.2 years, or 12 years longer than correctional and police officers.

Psychological Stress

As a group, correctional officers are more likely to suffer significant psychological stress. The emotional control needed to handle assaults, inmate confrontations and other institutional realities also means no psychological reprieve for the officer who works in such environments, according to "Corrections One" magazine. Officers can suffer lasting mental trauma that makes it difficult or impossible to separate home and work life. The introduction of these stresses into the home also makes itself felt in above average rates for divorce, domestic abuse and suicide.

Corrections Chief Kevin Hanson

2014 ANNUAL REPORT



SHERIFF ROBERT SNAZA

PUBLIC SAFETY THROUGH PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

		CUSTODY		
		2012	2013	2014
JAIL POPULATION	Rated Capacity	356	356	356
	Average Daily Population (ADP)	211	203	194
	Male/Female ADP	173/38	165/38	161/33
PROCESSES	Bookings	4,915	4,838	4,603
	Releases	4,757	4,822	4,661
	Average Length of Stay	9 d	9 d	9 d
TRANSPORT	Jury Trials	18	25	12
	Contract Transports	179	1282	1,046
	Medical Transports	64	76	46
	Inmate Relay Transports	2,679	1,889	1,663
	Local Court Transports	4,216	4,102	3,921
	DISC	IPLINE AND CLASSIFIC	CATION	
		2012	2013	2014
INMATE DISCIPLINE	Inmate vs. Inmate Assaults	8	8	7
	Inmate vs. Staff Assaults	0	2	4
	Incident Reports	1,237	1,210	1,458
	Disciplinary Hearings	95	88	132
Stats begin mid 2011	Mental Health Incidents	79	155	140
Stats begin mid 2011	MH Discipline Incident	42	57	83
	Minor Infractions	215	94	198
	Major Infractions	99	187	156

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CONTRACT SERVICES				
		2012	2013	2014
MEDICAL SERVICES	Inmates Evaluated	13,655	10,134	9,526
	Dental Visits	6	0	1
MENTAL HEALTH SER- VICES	Transports to WSH	16	28	24
	MHP Total Contacts	656	514	537
	Kites responded to (stats began 9/2013)	N/A	918	2,112
	Total hours worked (stats began 9/2013)	N/A	383.25	1,938.96
COSTS OF MEDICAL	TOTAL Pharmacy	\$59,362.22	\$62,214.70	\$51,146.77
	Cost of Psych Meds	\$32,531.23	\$21,584.34	\$14,235.64
MEDICAL/MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES	Offsite Medical Bills Received	\$490,412.90	\$494,091.96	\$540,307.00
	Offsite Medical Bills Paid (%)	\$97,345.20 (16%)	\$171,204.40	\$64,452.30
	Inmate Payments Collected	\$8,754.70	\$14,586.00	\$8,821.78
	Paid to Cascade Mental Health/Steck in 2012, beginning of 2013	\$34,000	\$31,332.16	\$79,515.11
	Paid to Steck Medical Clinic	\$389,922.63	\$380,117.89	\$354,732.27
FOOD SERVICES	Meals Served	236,224	221,175	229,350
	Cost of Food and Services	\$319,825.64	\$370,164.90	\$360.989.13
	Cost Per Meal	\$1.30	\$1.68	\$1.57

LEWIS COUNTY JAIL

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PUBLIC SAFETY THROUGH PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

CONTRACT INMATES					
		2012	2013	2014	
DAILY POPULATION (ADP)	Out of County Contract Inmates	60.25	65	61	
OUT OF COUNTY	DOC	\$526,836.96	\$459,842.41	\$600,687.99	
	Thurston County	\$259,425.00	\$433,008.00	\$225,976.80	
	City of Lacey	\$88,425.00	\$6,435.00	\$0.00	
	City of Hoquiam	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
	Olympia City Jail	\$401,500.00	\$413,625.00	\$424,261.27	
IN COUNTY	Centralia	\$138,897.00	\$138,897.00	\$181,327.50	
	Chehalis	\$84,776.10	\$67,495.42	\$99,925.03	
	Morton	\$18,200.00	\$17,000.00	\$19,188.75	
	Mossyrock	\$9,710.00	\$5,580.00	\$2,625.00	
	Napavine	\$8,910.00	\$11,589.50	\$8,961.77	
	PeEll	\$1,881.00	\$1,881.00	\$376.50	
	Toledo	\$6,358.00	\$6,325.00	\$9,922.52	
	Vader	\$3,019.52	\$3,019.52	\$4,332.31	
	Winlock	\$14,719.45	\$12,340.10	\$8,143.88	
GRAND TOTAL		\$1,562,608.53	\$1,577,307.95	\$1,585,729.32	

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PUBLIC SAFETY THROUGH PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

SUPPORT SERVICES					
		2012	2013	2014	
WARRANTS	Superior Court Warrants	470	413	348	
	Superior Court Orders	685	693	709	
	District Court Warrants	938	1,095	919	
	District Court Orders	270	265	227	
	Winlock Warrants and Orders	56	45	46	
	Napavine Warrants and Orders	43	61	67	
	Vader Warrants and Orders	9	8	13	
	TOTAL WARRANTS and ORDERS	2,471	2,580	2,329	
OTHER	Inmate Mail Received	20,495	19,098	15,820	
	Inmate Mail Sent	17,412	15,924	13,447	
	Onsite Public Visitors	2,764	676	676	
	Off-site Visit Calls	3,300	6,068	5,335	
	Professional Visitors	3,776	2,587	2,957	

As of the 2013 Census the population for Lewis County was estimated at 75,081 residents. Lewis County is located between Fortland and Seattle and encompasses about 2,436 square miles, bordered by Skamania, Yakima, Cowlitz, Thurston, Fierce, Grays Harbor, Wahkiakum, and Facific counties.